always accessible to the people and I do not feel that further more scrutinisation is being delayed. Besides the Local Post-Master himself, the Development Officers are deployed on the spot. As soon as the claim is made, either the Post Master or the person who is authorised by the law is accessible to the claimant and public. So far as inaccessibility to the claimants is concerned, the question does not arise.

SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM: Sir, the Postal Life Insurance, in the background of new players, particularly private players, has a wider reach and it has close proximity with the rural masses. But it has not been popularised like the private players are popularising their life insurance policies. The Postal Life Insurance has to be popularised. This is one. Number two is this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One question please.

SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM: Sir, Part (a) of the answer says, "A time limit of 60 days...." Sixty-days is too long a period and that too for rural people. Further, 60 days from the actual date of receipt of complete papers. Sir, how do they say complete papers? This is a very catchy word. they can reject it by saying that there is a particular paper which is incomplete. Therefore, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether a standard simple form will be issued for making claims.

SHRI A. RAJA: Sir, so far as the second part of the question of the hon. Member is concerned, yes, there is a prescribed format as contemplated in the procedure. I have not come across any difficulties in getting the scrutinisation of the documents before the claim is made. Regarding the first part of the question. I must submit before the House that whether publicity is given or not, is immaterial. Of course, the existence of postal system in every village is some sort of publicity. But, apart from that, I can share with the hon. Member that the Rural Postal Life Insurance is among the top insurance agencies which is having 52,46,673 policies with the total sum assured as Rs. 33,866 crores. It is a huge number in terms of money and also in terms of policies. So, the growth rate is 48 per cent. I cannot be compared with any other organisation in the insurance sector. Although the question of publicity is well taken, it does not means that lack of publicity is anti-growth to the Department.

Indian workers in Middle-East

*109. SHRI MOHAMMED AMIN:
SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: ††

Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any mechanism or supervisory body to ensure that the contracts between Indian workers in Middle-East countries and the contractors and employers are adhered to;

(b) if so, the number of cases of violations that have been reported in the years 2006 and 2007 and the steps that have been taken to redress their grievances/breach of contracts; and

(c) if not, the steps that are being taken to take care of growing number of cases being reported about breach of contracts, under-payment, ill-treatment like seizure of passport, etc. and poor working conditions?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

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††The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Prasanta Chatterjee.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir. The Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) is the statutory authority designated under the Emigration Act, 1983 for the protection and welfare of emigrants.

The work contract between the employer and the worker set out the terms and conditions of employment, violation of which attracts the penal provisions of the Act. In the case of unskiled workers/household service workers the work contracts has to be duly attested by the Embassy of India. The Recruiting Agent is liable to ensure compliance of the terms and conditions of the contract on the part of the employer.

In the event of violation of the contractual provisions, action is taken against the recruiting agent by way of suspension/cancellation of the license and/or prosecution. The Foreign Employers (FEs) concerned are blacklisted.

In order to reinforce this regulatory system and to ensure that contractual obligations are adhered to by the employer and for the protection and welfare of the workers, the Ministry has signed bilateral agreements with major labour receiving countries. Such MOUs have been signed with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait. An Additional Protocol has been signed with Qatar. MOU has been finalised with Malaysia and Oman. These agreements provide for a Joint Working Group to look into and resolve the problems and concerns of Indian workers including adherence of the terms and conditions of work contracts by employers.

(b) The number of violations reported and action taken in the last two years are detailed below:

Complaints against registered recruiting agents

Year	No. of complaints	Show Cause issued	No. of Registration Certificates Suspended/ cancelled	No. of Complaints Dropped/ resolved	Cases Pending
2006	167	167	65	69	33*
2007	128	122	34	37	57

(*included)

Foreign Employers blacklisted

Year	Number of companies blacklisted
2006	26
2007	10

(c) Does not arise.

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Sir, it has been reported in the recent past that a number of Indian workers have been deported from Middle-East and many of them have been put behind bars since they were demanding justice from their overseas employers. I want to know from the Minister: What action has been taken in those cases by the Government to safeguard the interests of the Indian workers? That is my first question.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, deportation is done on two reasons. Large number of workers have been deported because they were on illegal stay there. They were called illegal. So, the amnesty has been declared occasionally and this year also, amnesty has been declared and it was availed of by the Indian community who were staying there illegally. That is one part of the answer. It is given in the answer.

Sir, the other question is that recently there was some agitation in some institutions of one of the Gulf countries. I think, those who were involved in violence there — 159 people — have been detained. Out of these, 90 are Indian nationals. They were detained and arrested, but, due to the intervention or persuasion of our Mission, 90 have been deported. In the same way, in another company, there was a strike. About 500 people have been detained and not all of them are Indian nationals; there are other nationals also. All the 500 have been deported. That is the story. Another important thing is, to protect the interests of the workers, the Ministry has taken initiatives. We have already signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Kuwait as well as UAE. We have stipulated the protection of workers' salary, medical benefits, living conditions including the domestic workers and women workers. Two days ago, I signed an agreement with Qatar in the same way. Now, initial negotiations have been completed with two other countries, that is, Bahrain and Oman. I am trying to persuade the Government of the State of Saudi Arabia to come to the negotiating table to make this kind of an agreement. We are taking care of the workers' interests and we will continue to do that.

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Sir, my second question is that some unauthorised agents are operating in the field. A large number of such agnecies are existing in Indian who have been identified as unauthorised agency houses. So, I want to know from the Government: What action has been taken by the Government so far to check their illegal activities?

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, it is a very important question. The Government is taking all the steps. It is true that a large number of unauthorised people, claim to be agents, are going to the villages and exploiting the poor people. Sir, if you can taken the complaints of the last three years, it comes to 53 for 2005, 78 for 2006 and so far 37 complaints in this year. Prosecution has also been recommended. Sir, action has to be taken by the State Governments. We are pursuing with the State Governments to take very stringent action. Prosecution must be pusued with all vigour. That is the only way. Now, there is proposal to amend the Immigration Act. It will definitely go for the consideration of the Cabinet. I can assure this House that after the amendment is passed, we will do our best to check this problem in collaboration with the State Government. With their help, we can do that. I hope all the State Governments will cooperate with us in checking these unauthorised activities.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Development of Delhi-Srinagar (Garhwal) Road as a National Highway

*101. SHRI RAJ NATH SINGH: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has declared Delhi-Mawana-Kotdwara-Pauri-Srinagar (Garhwal) road as a National Highway;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government has completed the said road upto Satpuli but it is still pending with the present Government for completion of width; and

(c) by when the said road would be completed and the reasons for the slow progress of work?